

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the examination of the application. However, in view of the foregoing amendments and the remarks that follow, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections.

35 U.S.C. §112:

The claims have been amended to address the issues raised by the Examiner in paragraphs 4-9 on pages 2 and 3 of the Official Action. Applicants submit that there is now antecedent basis for each of the claim terms. In the event that the Examiner is not satisfied that the issues under 35 U.S.C. §112 have been adequately addressed, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Art Rejections:

Claim 97 has been rejected under 34 U.S.C. §102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,551,162, hereinafter *Hicks*. In response to that rejection, claim 97 has been carefully amended to define that the connector comprises a plurality of chambers and each chamber is arranged to mate with one or more holes of a preform, and wherein at least one of the chambers is arranged to mate with a plurality of holes of a preform. Claim 97 further states that each chamber is connectable to a pressure source. Support for the amendments to claim 97 can be found generally throughout the application, and in particular Figure 4 and the portions of the application describing Figure 4. However, claim 97 is not limited to the disclosed preferred embodiments.

In contrast to claim 97, the manifold plate 50 of *Hicks* does not include a plurality of chambers wherein at least one of the chambers is arranged to mate with

a plurality of holes. According to the description in *Hicks*, each opening in the manifold 50 is connectable to only one opening in the preform assembly 46.

Accordingly, claim 97 is now patentable over *Hicks*.

It appears that the Examiner is also rejecting claims 98-103 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over *Hicks*. If this assumption is not correct, the Examiner is respectfully requested to clarify the record. Claims 98-103 each depend from claim 97, either directly or indirectly, and are thus therefore patentable over *Hicks* at least for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 97.

Claim 97 has also been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0261460, hereinafter *Roba*. *Roba* is completely different from the amended claim 97. Specifically, *Roba* does not teach or suggest a connector for connecting a preform. Instead, *Roba* discloses a burner for manufacturing a glass optical fibre preform by vapor deposition. *Roba* does not teach or suggest a connector having a plurality of chambers wherein at least one of the chambers is arranged to mate with a plurality of holes in a preform. In *Roba*, each section of the burner connects to one tube that extends through the burner. Accordingly, claim 97 is also patentable over *Roba*. Claim 104 depends from claim 97, and is thus also patentable over *Roba* at least for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 97.

To further define the protection to which Applicants are entitled, new claims 108-114 have been added. Claims 108-110 depend from claim 97, and are thus patentable over the prior art at least for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 97.

New claims 111-114 each recite a connector having a features not taught or suggested by the prior art.

Accordingly, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this Amendment, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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